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Adolescent Literature Paper

TED 707

Why New Literacies Are Important In Today’s Classroom

As we are quickly approaching the end of yet another school year, I sit back and wonder what the next year is going to bring. With budget cuts, new forms of required standardized testing, and more pressure from parents and cooperating staff; teachers, now more so than before, have more stress added to their jobs. As the years go by we can see how new technologies have improved our school systems and have helped teacher teach their classes. With more variety of resources the internet alone has made it easy for students to connect with others all around the world as well as learn about some things that were nearly impossible to imagine, can now be found at the touch of their fingers. With new literacies (new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology) becoming more popular and readily available, it turns another page for us future teachers and students of America.

As new literacies that include digital and media technologies evolve, preparing students to understand and adjust to these literacy demands is critical to current and future expectations for pleasure and work (International Reading Association, 2001; Leu, Mallette, Karchmer, & Kara-Soteriou, 2005).

In the following paper I will discuss the domains of literacy, as well as some project ideas that may help students achieve their goals.

As we live in a “facebook” world we can see how technology has changed our social lives. Facebook and other social networks help us keep in touch with friends and family all over the world. You may ask what good does this do for a fifth grader. Well when I was in fifth grade we had pen pals. We wrote letters back and forth to our randomly picked pen-pal. With the new technologies you can have your student’s right back and forth via email or a monitored and secured social website. This way it is cheaper and students can get responses more quickly.

“Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach…our students today are all native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games, and the internet” (Cin(E)- Poetry: Engaging the Digital Generation in 21st Century Response). Some teachers may argue that they can’t teach these new literacies, well fine then, let the students teach you. As a teacher you shouldn’t be afraid to learn from your students or with your students. As stated in the book Adolescents and Digital Literacies Learning Alongside Our Students written by Sara Kaider “64% of online U.S. teens had created some sort of content on the internet. 33% created or work on webpages or blogs, 28% created their own online journal or blog, 27% maintain their own personal webpage, and 26% remix content they find online into their own creation”. A project that you could have your students do is create their own webpage or blog. Leave the criteria wide open and see where your students take you, give no limitations or boundaries. This will help you understand on what level each student is on and it will allow your students to be creative and show you what they know.

When we think of the affective domain of literacy we have to look at through the eyes of our students. Although we grew up with a pen and paper our students today have seen more emails written then letters mailed and have heard more clicks of keys then checks been written doesn’t make it impossible to be an effective teacher.

"We will not be able to achieve a liberating, collective intelligence until we can achieve a collective digital literacy, and we have now, more than ever, perhaps, the opportunity and the technologies to assist us in the human project of shaping, creating, authoring and developing ourselves as the formers of our own culture. To this end, we must create the conditions for people to become wise in their own way." (Poore, M. (2011). Digital Literacy: Human Flourishing and Collective Intelligence in a Knowledge Society. Australian Jouranal of Language and Literacy, 19 (2),20-26.)

Kajder makes a good point when she writes “if I devalue or reduce the importance of what kids are doing to produce and read texts outside of my classroom walls, I ignore what they can do, and I limit what we can do together”. We need to put ourselves in our student’s shoes and that is how we will make a difference in their lives. "Children learn these skills as part of their lives, like language, which they learn without realizing they are learning it." (N. Andersen, New Media and New Media Literacy: The Horizon Has Become the Landscape—New Media Are Here,; report produced by Cable in the Classroom, 2002, pp. 30–35)

New literacies help stimulate critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills using technology in response to adolescent literature by giving each and every student the opportunity to go above and beyond. When I think about technology the first thing that comes to my mind is the word endless. Technology has no limits, thus giving students opportunities to learn in a new way if they are willing to use their problem solving skills and critical thinking skills. New literacies using technology will open doors for today’s students as they are re-inventing response to literature as a multimedia. Students can see their finished work on the **World Wide Web**, they will have the opportunity to have their very own work responded to and critiqued by a wider audience making it more worthwhile.

A good way to introduce these new literacies to your students is by using a scaffolding approach. Start at the bottom, as if all your students had no experience at all when it comes to creating projects on/using the web. An easy way to start is have your students create a wordle. This is easily done by going to www.wordle.net and the directions are on this website. Simply type in a variety of words and/or phrases and push create. This will then automatically create your wordle for you! Once your students have created this they can move onto a more challenging creation such as a thematic braiding.

Thematic braiding is an activity that will help you explore a theme, text-to text connection, personal connections, and text to world connections/questions associated with you. Have your students use the digital tool Google Docs presentation to complete this activity. Have your students design a title slide with a visual braid as metaphor, identifying an assigned novel, author, theme and genre. Your students could use a chosen theme, to draw connections to their personal life, to the world at large and to another text as they braid their own understanding of the novels theme. As your students explore the use of flickr and google docs while creating this assignment they will feel comfortable to move onto something that is a little more challenging such as creating a digital poem.

A digital poem is more complex than the thematic braiding because it gives your students the opportunity to add voice to their project. A digital poem can be created by using a variety programs available on the web or simply by using your own source, such as a bloggie or even a cell phone. Have your students write their own poem about an issue that is found in your selected piece of literature. After students have created and proof read their poem have them “bring it to life” by making a video out of it. After each student has effectively created their own digital poem you can have them use all of their new knowledge and experience to create their very own public service announcement!

A public service announcement is similar to the digital poem but make the criteria more demanding. Such as encourage your students to that their public service announcements must have video, voice, and pictures included in it. Have your students use images they find on their Flickr account that they think support and illustrate their message, as well as music they find on WeVideo or other resources. Have them write a script for their public service announcement that will evoke feelings of the theme that they have chosen. These projects scaffold from a beginner user of new literacies to an intermediate user without the pressures of feeling “lost”. This will help your students feel open to idea of learning new things that this new technology world that we live in has to offer, as well as, teach you a thing or two.

These digital responses to literature projects meet the common core state standards by determining a central idea of a text and analyzing its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas and providing an objective summary of the text. An example of this is shown in all of these projects but mainly in the thematic braiding. It is shown in the thematic braiding by relating the book to oneself, the world, and other texts.

As a teacher of future middle school students, I have learned that the process of creating the digital response to literature is best done using a scaffolding method. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs it has been shown that you can teach an old dog new tricks! I started this class with absolutely no experience using any of these methods such as Wevideo, bloggies, Flickr, Imovie, and Windows Movie Maker and in the short few months I have used or at least became familiar with all of these user friendly programs. Seeing that teaching the “unteachable” is possible in that short amount of time, I can only imagine what the possibilities are for a more fresh and youthful mind which is given an entire school year to create such wonderful and insightful digital projects. To keep up with today’s technological standards, I have created a wiki which has project descriptions and examples of a wordle, thematic braiding, and my very own public service announcement. [sheenanelson - PSA](http://sheenanelson.wikispaces.com/PSA) <http://sheenanelson.wikispaces.com/PSA>

Works Cited

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[www.purposefultechnology.weebly.com](http://www.purposefultechnology.weebly.com)

Cin(E)- Poetry: Engaging the Digital Generation in 21st Century Response